



CITY OF HOMER

PUBLIC WORKS

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MEMORANDUM 10-16

To: Walt Wrede, City Manager *W. Wrede*
From: Dan Gardner, PW Inspector
Through: Carey Meyer, PW Director
Date: July 23, 2009
Subject: Hickerson Memorial Cemetery
Purchase of Additional Lands

History

In April of 1970, the local American Legion deeded the existing Hickerson Memorial Cemetery to the City of Homer for \$10.00. The tract consists of 3.34 acres which allows for 806 total grave lots. At that time, 123 of the 806 lots were occupied.

Present

At present, there are 125 lots remaining of the 806 lots of Hickerson Memorial Cemetery (see attached map). Many of those available lots are not blocked together, which is often how lots are purchased to allow family members to be buried together. So, for instance, if we meet with family members next week to select a lot for a deceased person, multiple lots could be purchased at the same time for family plots. Although there is no way of knowing just how long it will be until all of the lots are used or spoken for, one can see that lots are being purchased for interment or reservation with greater frequency than in past years. The population of the Homer Area has significantly increased since those early years of the 1970s. It is my opinion that the City needs to actively pursue additional property, suited for cemetery use, and make the acquisition within the next year. After acquisition, additional funding and time will be needed to allow for development of the property before it can put into use (fencing, clearing, lawn growth, road construction).

To date, the only property seriously pursued for purchase is the land surrounding the existing cemetery. This is due to the obvious location preference and ease of expansion as opposed to an entirely different location, and due to the optimum soils for digging graves and drainage as compared to typical soils in the lands below Diamond Ridge.

The lot immediately east of the cemetery has a home on it, and the lot immediately north is not available, nor will it be, according to the land owners. Their intent is to keep it within their

family. That leaves available the 3 lots immediately west of the cemetery (see attached map). In 2008, the City attempted to acquire these lots from the owner, Paul Taylor, but his asking price was too high for an outright purchase, and his proposal of a land trade was dismissed by Council.

[REDACTED] (No one had that exact figure). The appraisal that the City ordered from Derry & Associates in September of 2008 came in at \$179,000. If the City intends to continue to provide the service of a cemetery, we may need to consider purchasing these lots, even at a figure higher than the appraisal, to have the preferred location and soil conditions referenced above.

If the three lots are purchased it is estimated that 700 additional cemetery lots would become available. If we would opt to only purchase the upper two lots (lots 11A & 11B) which are the most favorable due to lot dimension and topography, it is estimated that an additional 540 lots would become available.

The City will not run out of lots within the next year, but it won't be long until selection will be very limited for families. Delaying the acquisition of additional lands will likely drive the cost up and also decrease options for location.

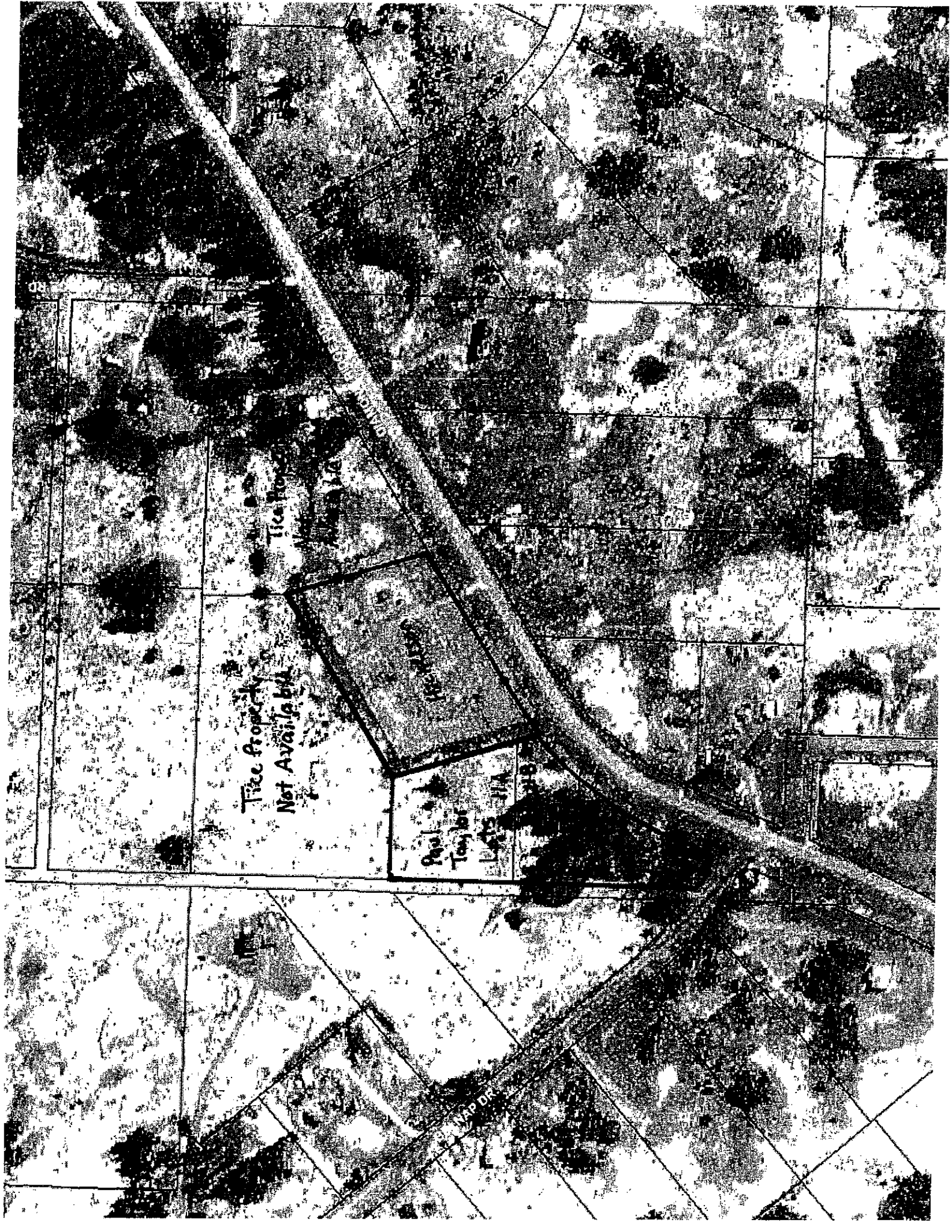
Options to Consider

1. Purchase additional property adjacent to the Hickerson Memorial Cemetery (Lots 11A&B, or Lots 11A, 11B, and 11C)
2. Pursue an entirely different location that may cost less. It would need to have minimal slope to the land and ground water would need to be taken into account.
3. Get out of the cemetery business. Allow Hickerson Cemetery to fill to capacity and cease to provide lots for burial. The private sector could assume the role if desired, or people could be buried in other communities.

Recommendation

Enter negotiations with Mr. Taylor for the outright purchase of his three lots. He has indicated that his \$229,500 figure is all that he will consider. But, I believe it is reasonable to attempt to negotiate a lower figure.

After acquisition of the land, obtain a cost estimate for the required improvements and budget for construction of the improvements the following year.



Free Property
Not Available

Paul
Taylor
Lands 114

WAP DR